

OK/SALT

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Reject SALT Now

The discovery of Soviet troops in Cuba suddenly threatens to become the straw that breaks the back of the strategic arms treaty. Yet the only surprising thing is that anyone should be surprised. Didn't everyone know that the Soviet Union is engaged in a world-wide geopolitical offensive under the umbrella of its massive military build-up? And isn't it equally clear that the debate over SALT is really a debate over whether or not the U.S. will acquiesce to this imperial drive?

As the debate proceeds, both voters and their representatives are gradually awakening to the realities of our situation. The Cuban issue, and before it the Kissinger-Nunn position of linking support for the treaty to defense budget increases, have been useful steps in the educational process. As debate proceeds further, more people will recognize that the strategic arms negotiations are not incidental to the tipping military and political balance, but instrumental to it.

The treaty as it stands would ratify Soviet gains in central weapons systems. It would also ratify the vacillating foreign policy record of the Carter administration; after all, the administration itself bills the treaty as the centerpiece of its foreign policy. Above all, the treaty would stand in the way of future U.S. efforts to rectify the military balance. Rejecting it would be the clearest first step toward reversing the recent adverse trends. All of this is implicit in much of the recent discussion, and it is time the so-far timid critics grasped the nettle and called for a clear and unambiguous rejection.

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It is first of all vital to recognize the enormity of the Soviet arms drive. As Henry S. Rowen details nearby, the Soviets are now outspending us by 45% on defense, and by 100% in military investment. This increasing Soviet power is before our eyes translating itself into greater boldness and greater political influence throughout the world. Cuba of course strikes close to home; but the threat to the Middle Eastern oil lines is even more significant.

We do of course have the option of accepting a Soviet imperium. It is hard to imagine us failing to retain enough power to make it inconvenient for them to land troops on Long Beach or Long Island. But with the Soviets already sending muscle men around our airports and tapping our phone calls, it is not so hard to imagine the U.S. evolving into a big Finland; there would still be elections, but the Soviets would have a practical veto over certain nominees. Our allies would suffer more. The result would be a worldwide erosion, already so evident in the plight of the Indochinese boat people, of those values for which Western civilization has stood: the idea of progress, economic growth, personal freedom, individual liberty.

The other option is to offset the Soviet arms drive with a military build-up of our own. Senator Nunn's proposed 4% to 5% real growth in spending, borrowed from a politicized Joint Chiefs, is a creditable start for the next fiscal year. But it will not close the gap. A realistic estimate would be that we need additional military spending of about 1% of GNP, moving over a few years from the current 5% to about 6%. This would still not bring us to Soviet spending levels; but it would make their ambitions for superiority expensive enough to stress their economic system. At that point they might even become willing to talk about serious arms control.

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It is no accident that the unparalleled Soviet military gains coincide with the era of arms negotiation. There is of course no treaty with a clause saying the U.S. can spend only so much on defense and the Soviets can spend 45% more. But the dynamics of the process—the attempt to reach a treaty more than the ultimate provisions—have curtailed American military programs. There is no more cogent statement of this than the melancholy testimony of Henry Kissinger reprinted alongside. Note well that Mr. Kissinger concludes that on the record the arms control process has restrained the U.S. without restraining the Soviet Union.

This result cannot be overcome simply by a tougher stance in the future, even if by some superhuman effort we could overcome the problems that arise when an open political system negotiates with a closed one. For we are left with provisions that limit U.S. technologies in ways that make them uneconomic to pursue. SALT-I killed the U.S. anti-missile program in precisely this way, and SALT-II threatens both the mobile ICBM and the cruise missile.

It is said that while the SALT-II provisions do not curb the Soviet arms drive, neither do they stop anything the Carter administration wants to build. This is far from clear, witness

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the reprinted remarks from Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov. Obviously the Soviets believe the treaty outlaws the administration's MX missile because of professed difficulties in verifying how many are deployed.

It is said that there will be no renewal of the three-year protocol limiting ground and sea-launched cruise missiles to ranges of 600 kilometers—far less than the new Soviet SS-20 missile already threatening our European allies. Even SALT proponents concede these restrictions are so one-sided they cannot be accepted permanently. But at the very least, the protocol precedent, like the MX verification problem, creates huge bargaining chips for the Soviets. If SALT-III is to ignore the protocol precedent and ratify the MX, what else will we have to give up?

And if all this is laid aside, the fact remains that the Carter administration's plans do not call for a gap-closing effort. Lay aside, too, any of the predictable political effects on future efforts; in congressional budget committees the prospect of SALT-III is already being used to argue against new programs. Even if all this is overcome, SALT-II forecloses options that would be of extreme interest to any future administration interested in closing the gap. For example, it precludes cruise missiles based on short take-off-and-landing aircraft as an answer to the SS-20 in the European theater.

The real logic of the Nunn-Kissinger requests for more spending is precisely to demonstrate that a gap-closing effort can be mounted within the provisions of SALT. It is up to the administration to demonstrate this by coming up with real programs. So far the administration offers nothing except an offset to inflation to maintain its original plans. This leaves room for a few billion in concessions later, and perhaps the administration can come up with cosmetic concessions on the troops in Cuba. This would test whether Mr. Kissinger and Senator Nunn and Senator Church have the courage of their convictions.

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popularity. In a nuclear era it is in fact an idea that cannot be permanently abandoned. But witnessing the negotiations over the past decade, real arms control can come only in a new military and political context, when the U.S. has reestablished its determination to avoid one-sided agreements. Many of the timid critics recognize this, but are unwilling to risk the unpopularity of saying so. So they say that we may have to cut off the current SALT talks, but never today, always tomorrow.

Mr. Kissinger, for example, wants the Senate to review Soviet behavior to see whether the negotiations need to be stopped. But in the past few years, Soviet-backed Marxist governments have taken over seven nations. How many would Mr. Kissinger allow before acting? Eight? Ten? Twenty?

Similarly, former UN Ambassador Moynihan, who obviously understands the dynamics, wants to stop SALT if the Soviets demonstrate they are not interested in real reductions. They have already, repeatedly and brutally, demonstrated that they are interested in no such thing.

Similarly again with the protocol. The only way we can avoid its renewal is simply to refuse, to scuttle the talks. If that is to be the ultimate outcome three years hence, why wait?

In fact, there will never be an easier time than now. With the Carter administration's clear record on foreign policy, and with a new election pending, there will never be an easier time to signal the need for change. With the Soviets so clearly on the march, there will never be an easier time to demonstrate linkage. With the treaty ratifying the Soviet building plans, there will never be an easier time to send the message that arms control means reductions. With the treaty not yet ratified, there will never be an easier time to insure that the protocol provisions do not become permanent.

There will never be an easier time to start a real national debate on meeting the Soviet challenge, perhaps to put arms control on a more solid future footing, and certainly to insure that we are not bullied and intimidated for the rest of this generation. This requires a sustained effort, and cannot be done with one stroke, but has to start sometime. The clearest, most meaningful and most essential starting place is the Strategic Arms Treaty. Between the clear opponents and the timid critics there are more than enough votes to reject the treaty and do it now; the Senators need only summon the courage to draw the obvious conclusion of their own logic.